

# THE LAST SHOT

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by FREDERICK PALMER

## SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—At their home on the frontier between the Browns and Grays, Marta, Gailard and her mother, entertaining Colonel Westerling of the Grays, see Captain Lanstron, staff intelligence officer of the Browns, injured by a fall in his aeroplane.

CHAPTER II.—Ten years later, Westerling, nominal vice but real chief of staff, reinforces South La Tir, meditates on war, and speculates on the comparative ages of himself and Marta, who is visiting in the Gray capital.

CHAPTER III.—Westerling calls on Marta. She tells him of her teaching children the follies of war and martial patriotism, begs him to prevent war while he is chief of staff, and predicts that if he makes war against the Browns he will not win.

CHAPTER IV.—On the march with the 33d of the Browns Private Stranaky, anarchist, declares war and played-out patriotism and is placed under arrest. Colonel Lanstron overhears, begs him off saying the anarchist will fight well when encouraged and is "all man."

CHAPTER V.—Lanstron calls on Marta at her home. He talks with Feller, the gardener. Marta tells Lanstron that she believes Feller to be a spy. Lanstron confesses it is true.

CHAPTER VI.—Lanstron shows Marta a telephone with Feller has concealed in a secret passage under the tower for use to benefit the Browns in war emergency, pointing out its value as being in the center of the fighting zone in case of war. Marta consents for it and Feller to remain for the present. Lanstron declares his love for Marta.

CHAPTER VII.—Westerling and the Gray premier plan to use a trivial international affair to foment warlike patriotism in army and people and strike before declaring war. Partow, Brown chief of staff, and Lanstron, made vice, discuss the trouble, and the Brown defenses. Partow reveals his plans to Lanstron.

CHAPTER VIII.—At the frontier the two armies lie crouched for attack and defense. In the town with the non-combatants fleeing from the danger zone, Marta hears her child pupils recite the peace oath.

CHAPTER IX.—The Gray army crosses the border line and attacks. The Browns check them. Artillery, infantry, aeroplanes and dirigibles engage. Stranaky, rising to make the anarchist speech of his life, draws the Gray artillery fire. Nicked by a shrapnel splinter he goes berserk and fights "all a man."

CHAPTER X.—Marta has her first glimpse of war in its modern, cold, scientific, murderous brutality. She allows the secret telephone to remain.

CHAPTER XI.—The Browns fall back to the Gailard house. Stranaky forages. Marta sees a night attack.

CHAPTER XII.—The Grays attack in force. The call of the fight too strong for Feller, he leaves his secret telephone and goes back to his gun. Hand to hand fighting. The Browns fall back again.

CHAPTER XIII.—Marta asks Lanstron over the secret telephone to appeal to Partow to stop the fighting. Vandalism by Gray soldiers in the Gailard house which, Marta is notified, will be made Westerling's headquarters.

CHAPTER XIV.—Westerling and his staff occupy the Gailard house. At tea with Marta, Westerling begins to woo her; disclosing his selfish ambitions. Marta apparently throws her fortunes with the Grays and offers to give valuable information.

CHAPTER XV.—Marta calls up Lanstron on the secret telephone and with his assistance plans to give Westerling false information that will trap the Gray army. Westerling, after questioning her, forms his plan of attack upon what he has learned.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Grays win Bordir. Marta continues to play her role and through her Westerling is led to concentrate the attack on the main line at Engadir. A leak of information is suspected, but the source is undiscovered. Positions are won but the Browns always give way grudgingly, never taken by surprise.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Thumbs Down for Bouchard.

Haggard and at bay, Bouchard faced the circle of frowns around the polished expanse of that precious heirloom, the dining-room table of the Gailards. The dreaded reckoning of the apprehensions which kept him restlessly awake at night had come at the next staff council after the fall of the Twin Boulder Redoubt. With the last approach to the main line of defense cleared, one chapter of the war was finished. But the officers did not manifest the elation that the occasion called for, which is not saying that they were discouraged. They had no doubt that eventually the Grays would dictate peace in the Browns' capital. Exactly stated, their mood was one of repressed professional irritation. Not until the third attempt was Twin Boulder Redoubt taken. As far as results were concerned, the nicely planned first assault might have been a stroke of strategy by the Browns to drive the Grays into an impassable fire zone.

"The trouble is we are not informed!" exclaimed Turcas, opening his thin lips even less than usual, but twisting them in a significant manner as he gave his words a rasping emphasis. The others hastened to follow his lead with equal candor.

"Exactly. We have no reports of their artillery strength, which we had greatly underestimated," said the chief of artillery.

"Our maps of their forts could not be less correct if revealed to us for purposes of deceit. Again and again we have thought that we had them surprised, only to be surprised ourselves. In short, they know what we are doing and we don't know what they are doing!" said the tactical expert.

There the chief of the aerostatic division took the defensive.

"They certainly don't learn our plans with their planes and dirigibles!" he declared energetically.

"Hardly, when we never see them over our lines."

"The Browns are acting on the defensive in the air as well as on the earth!"

"But our own planes and dirigibles bring little news," said Turcas. "I mean, those that return," he added pungently.

"And few do return. My men are not wanting in courage!" replied the chief aerostatic officer. "Immediately we get over the Brown lines the Browns, who keep cruising to and fro, are on us like hawks. They risk anything to bring us down. When we descend low we strike the fire of their high-angle guns, which are distributed the length of the frontier. I believe both their aerial fleet and their high-angle artillery were greatly underestimated. Finally, I cannot reduce my force too much in scouting or they might take the offensive."

"Another case of not being in

the know after our plans were transmitted to our own troops for the first attack they were known to the enemy."

"That looks like a leak!" exclaimed Westerling, "a leak, Bouchard, do you hear?" He was frowning and his lips were drawn and his cheeks mottled with red in a way not pleasant to see.

Stiffening in his chair, a flash of desperation in his eye, Bouchard's bony, long hand gripped the table edge. Every one felt that a sensation was coming.

"Yes, I have known that there was a leak!" he said with hoarse, painful deliberation. "I have sent out every possible tracer. I have followed up every sort of clue. I have transferred a dozen men. I have left nothing undone!"

"With no result?" persisted Westerling impatiently.

"Yes, always the same result: That the leak is here in this house—here in the grand headquarters of the army under our very noses. I know it is not the telegraphers or the clerks. It is a member of the staff!"

"Have you gone out of your head?" demanded Westerling. "What staff officer? How does he get the information to the enemy? Name the persons you suspect here and now! Explain, if you want to be considered sane!"

Here was the blackest accusation that could be made against an officer! The chosen men of the staff, tested through many grades before they reached the inner circle of cabinet secrecy, lost the composure of a council. All were leaning forward toward Bouchard breathless for his answer.

"There are three women on the grounds," said Bouchard. "I have been against their staying from the first."

He got no further. His words were drowned by the outburst of one of the younger members of the staff, who had either to laugh or choke at the picture of this deep-eyed, spectral sort of man, known as a woman-hater, in his revelation of the farcical source of his suspicions.

"Why not include Clarissa Eileen?" some one asked, starting a chorus of satirical exclamations.

"How do they get through the line?" "Yes, past a wall of bayonets?"

"When not even a soldier in uniform is allowed to move away from his command without a pass?"

"By wireless?" "Perhaps by telepathy!"

"Unless," said the chief of the aerostatic division, grinning, "Bouchard lends them the use of our own wires through the capital and around by the neutral countries across the Brown frontier!"

"But the correct plans and location of their forts and the numbers of their heavy guns and of their planes and dirigibles—your failure to have this information is not the result of any leak from our staff since the war began," said Turcas in his dry, penetrating voice, clearing the air of the smoke of scattered explosions.

"All were staring at Bouchard again. What answer had he to this? He was in the box, the evidence stated by the prosecutor. Let him speak!"

He was fairly beside himself in a paroxysm of rage and struck at the air with his clenched fist.

"—Lanstron!" he cried.

"There's no purpose in that. He can't hear you!" said Turcas, dryly as ever.

"He might, through the leak," said the chief aerostatic officer, who considered that many of his gallant subordinates had lost their lives through Bouchard's inefficiency. "Perhaps Clarissa Eileen has already telepathically wigwagged it to him."

"To lose your temper at a staff council is most unbecoming. Turcas would have kept his if hit in the back by a fool automobilist. Westerling had now recovered his. He was again the superman in command.

"It is for you and not for us to locate the leak; yes, for you!" he said. "That is all on the subject for the present," he added in a tone of mixed pity and contempt, which left Bouchard freed from the stare of his colleagues and in the miserable company of his humiliation.

All on the subject for the present! When it was taken up again his successor would be in charge. He, the indefatigable, the over-intense, with medieval partisan fervor, who loathed in secret machines like Turcas, was the first man of the staff to go for incompetency.

"And Engadir is the key-point," Westerling was saying.

"Yes," agreed Turcas.

"So we concentrate to break through there," Westerling continued, "while we engage the whole line fiercely enough to make the enemy uncertain where the crucial attack is to be made."

"But, generally, if there is any place that is naturally strong, that—Turcas began.

"The one place where they are confident that we won't attack!" Westerling interrupted. He repeated the professional respect for Turcas.

"Last night we got a written telegraphic staff message from the body of a dead officer of the Browns found in the Twin Boulder Redoubt," said the vice-chief, "which showed that in

Bouchard faced the circle of frowns.

formed!" concluded Turcas, returning grimly to his point.

He looked at Bouchard, and every one began looking at Bouchard. If the Gray tacticians had been outplayed by their opponents, if their losses for the ground gained exceeded calculations, then it was good to have a scapegoat for their professional mistakes. Bouchard was Westerling's choice for chief of intelligence. His blind loyalty was pleasing to his superior, who, hitherto, had promptly silenced any suggestion of criticism by repeating that the defensive always appeared to the offensive to be better informed than itself. But this time Westerling let the conversation run on without a word of excuse for his favorite.

Each fresh reproach from the staff, whose opinion was the only god he knew, was a dagger thrust to Bouchard. At night he had lain awake worrying about the leak; by day he had sought to trace it, only to find every clue leading back to the staff. Now he was as confused in his shame as a sensitive schoolboy. Vaguely, in his distress, he heard Westerling asking a question, while he saw all those eyes staring at him.

"What information have we about Engadir?"

"I believe it to be strongly fortified!" stammered Bouchard.

"You believe! You have no information?" pursued Westerling.

"No, sir," replied Bouchard. "Nothing—nothing new!"

"We do seem to get little information," said Westerling, looking hard at Bouchard in silence—the combined silence of the whole staff.

This public reproach could have but one meaning. He should soon receive a note which would thank him politely for his services, in the stereotyped phrases always used for the purpose, before announcing his transfer to a less responsible post.

"Very little, sir!" Bouchard replied doggedly.

"There is that we had from one of our aviators whose machine came down in a smash just as he got over our infantry positions on his return," said the chief aerostatic officer. "He was in a dying condition when we picked him up, and, as he was speaking with the last breaths in his body, naturally his account of what he had seen was somewhat incoherent. It would be of use, however, if we had plans of the forts that would enable us to check off his report intelligently."

"Yet, what evidence have we that Partow or Lanstron has done more than to make a fortunate guess or show military insight?" Westerling asked. "There is the case of my own belief that Bordir was weak, which proved correct."

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After a silence and a survey of the faces around, he added with sententious effect: "And I was right about Bordir!"

To this argument there could be no answer. The one stroke of generalship by the Grays, who, otherwise, had succeeded alone through repeated mass attacks, had been Westerling's hypothesis that had gained Bordir in a single assault.

"Engadir it is then!" said Turcas with the loyalty of the subordinate who makes a superior's conviction his own, the better to carry it out.

Hazily, Bouchard had heard the talk, while he was looking at Westerling and seeing him, not at the head of the council table, but in the arbor in eager appeal to Marta.

"I shall find out! I shall find out!" was drumming in his temples when the council rose; and, without a word or a backward glance, he was the first to leave the room.

When Bouchard returned to his desk he guessed the contents of the note awaiting him, but he took a long time to read its stereotyped expressions in transferring him to perfunctory duty well to the rear of the army. Then he pulled himself together and, leaden-hearted, settled down to arrange routine details for his departure, while the rest of the staff was immersed in the activity of the preparations for the attack on Engadir. He knew that he could not sleep if he lay down. So he spent the night at work. In the morning his successor, a young man whom he himself had chosen and trained, Colonel Bellini, appeared, and the fallen man received the rising man with forced official courtesy.

"In my own defense and for your aid," he said, "I show you a copy of what I have just written to General Westerling."

A brief note it was, in farewell, beginning with conventional thanks for Westerling's confidence in the past.

"I am punished for being right," it concluded. "It is my belief that Miss Gailard sends news to the enemy and

that she draws it from you without your consciousness of the fact. I tell you honestly. Do what you will with me."

It took more courage than any act of his life for the loyal Bouchard to dare such candor to a superior. Seeing the patchy, yellow, bloodless face drawn in stiff lines and the abysmal stare of the deep-set eyes in their bony recesses, Bellini was swept with a wave of sympathy.

"Thank you, Bouchard. You've been very fine!" said Bellini as he grasped Bouchard's hand, which was icy cold.

"My duty—my duty, in the hope that we shall kill two Browns for every Gray who has fallen—that we shall yet see them starved and besieged, and crying for mercy in their capital," replied Bouchard. He saluted with a dismal, urgent formality and stalked out of the room with the tread of the ghost of Hamlet's father.

The strange impression that this farewell left with Bellini still lingered when, a few moments later, Westerling summoned him. Not alone the diffidence of a new member of the staff going into the presence accounted for the stir in his temples, as he waited till some papers were signed before he had Westerling's attention.

Then Westerling picked up Bouchard's note and shook his head sadly.

"Poor Bouchard! You can see for yourself," and he handed the note to Bellini. "I should have realized earlier that it was a case for the doctor and not for reprimand. Mad! Poor Bouchard! He hadn't the ability or the resiliency of mind for his task, as I hope you have, colonel."

"I hope so, sir," replied Bellini.

"I've no doubt you have," said Westerling. "You are my choice!"

To be continued

SIX EX-GOVS. LIVING

The retirement of Gov. Cox to private life, swells the number of living ex-governors of Ohio to six. They are: Joseph B. Foraker, republican, Cincinnati, 1885-7; James E. Campbell, democrat, Columbus, 1890-2; M. T. Herrick, republican, Cleveland, 1894-5; Andrew L. Harris, republican, Eaton, 1906-8; Judson Harmon, democrat, Cincinnati, 1908-12; James M. Cox, democrat, Dayton, 1913-14.

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## BRUNSWICK

The meetings at the Disciple church will continue through this week and maybe all of next. There were six conversions Sunday and three received by letter.

Charles Gibbs and Albert Evans only had one day at grand jury work.

John Hitzelberger and family have moved back to their home in Abbeville, and Bert Enga and family moved into the old Kenyon house with Rus. Enga's. Mr. and Mrs. Turk have moved back to Cleveland.

A ten-pound boy was born Saturday night to Stephen Kling, Sr., and wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Seigfried of Kentucky have moved into the new home they bought of Mr. Wm. Milkey.

Charles Leinseder has severed connections with the Folley and Benjamin's store.

The Lamphere boys attended the funeral of their aunt, Mrs. Mary Jennings, in Berea on Tuesday. She lived here years ago.

Ethie Wyman received first prize on his Ancona rooster and then sold it to Shepard of Berea for \$40.

Mrs. Laux, who has been staying here at her daughter's, Mrs. Ernest Wilkey's, returned to her home in Cleveland Sunday and on Monday Stella Wilkey came from Cleveland to stay a couple of weeks.

Mrs. Scott Holden was taken to Lutheran hospital last Thursday for X-ray examination because of her severe headaches.

On Jan. 19, C. R. Wagner, deputy director of institutes, will be here for the afternoon and evening in the town hall in the interest of farmers and institute workers. He will have stereoptican views and moving pictures to interest all. This is free and everybody in invited.

The same officers were reelected at the farmers' institute for another year.

Alice Best and Faith Anderson of Medina spent Saturday night and Sunday with Helen Miner.

Verne Miner had a very sick cow from eating too much corn.

Sam Tibbitts has bought Mrs. Frank Rowley's place here at the center, to take possession in the spring.

Mrs. Will Strong, Mrs. Fred Leinseder and Mrs. Ethie Wyman have been to the Lutheran hospital to see

Mose Barry, who fell 30 feet from a telephone pole and broke a leg and arm. He is getting along as well as can be expected.

Elmer Bell, who has been staying at Dr. Wood's this winter and going to school, decided Monday night to change his occupation and left in the night taking with him the doctor's overcoat, gloves, suit cases. It looks to us older folks as if it was a very foolish move and he may live to see it. Later they found a note saying that he would send the articles back.

The Y. M. C. A. boys will have a box social in the town hall this Friday night.

Fourteen new applicants were voted on at the Grange meeting Tuesday afternoon.

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## TEACHERS' EXAMINATIONS

Teachers' examinations are held in Medina on the first Saturday of September, October, January, March, April, May, and on the last Friday of

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